THE BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER's

SERMON

BEFORE

THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 1788.

Being the Anniverſary of KING CHARLES's MARTYRDOM.

Die Veneris, 10 Februarii, 1788.

ORDERED, by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in Parliament aſſembled, That the Thanks of this Houſe be, and are hereby, given to the Lord Biſhop of Glouceſter, for the Sermon by him preached before this Houſe, on Wedneſday laſt, in the Abbey Church, Weſtminſter; and he is hereby deſired to cauſe the ſame to be forthwith printed and publiſhed.

ASHLEY COWPER,
Cler. Parliamentor.

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SERMON

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PREACHED BEFORE THE

LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL,

IN THE

ABBEY CHURCH OF WESTMINSTER,

ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 1788.

BEING

THE ANNIVERSARY OF KING CHARLES'S MARTYRDOM.

K Hallifax

BY SAMUEL, LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER.

LONDON:
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M.DCC.LXXXVIII.

SERMON, &c.

ROMANS xiii. 1, 2.

LET EVERY SOUL BE SUBJECT TO THE HIGHER POWERS: FOR THERE IS NO POWER BUT OF GOD; THE POWERS THAT BE ARE ORDAINED OF GOD: WHOSOEVER THEREFORE RESISTETH THE POWER, RESISTETH THE ORDINANCE OF GOD.

AT the time this precept was delivered by St. Paul, Nero was the Roman Emperor; a cruel and wicked prince, and infamous in the annals of hiſtory for his barbarous perſecution of the Chriſtians. It ſeems that, among other objections which were made in the primitive times to the new religion of Jeſus, this was one, that its doctrines were unfavourable to the civil power, and that its followers, under

 pretence

pretence of being only the ſervants of God, claimed an exemption from the duty of temporal ſubjection to Man. The argument which the Apoſtle uſes, to vindicate the Goſpel from ſo vile a ſcandal, and to guard his converts from entertaining opinions of ſo dangerous a tendency, is ſhort and concluſive: Submiſſion to our civil governors is part of the duty we owe to God: It is expedient in itſelf, and the ſtate of mankind requires it, there ſhould be ſome perſons inveſted with authority to ſee that *the poor and ſuch as are in need and neceſſity have right, to deliver the innocent from him that ſpoileth him* *, and to regulate and reſtrain the exceſſes of enormous wickedneſs: Government therefore, under all its varying forms, is a providential appointment; *there is no power but of God.* But here the Apoſtle knew it might be ſaid, the perſons who were then poſſeſſed of the ſupreme command were very bad men, addicted to all ſorts of idolatry and uncleanneſs, in a ſtate of enmity to God by their wicked works, and violent oppoſers of the religion of his Son: Could it be true of ſuch governors as theſe, that they were intitled to our obedience, according to the will of God? Yes, replies St. Paul, they are; *the powers that be*, the preſent powers, of whatever kind, or however averſe from the Chriſtian name, *are*, all of them, *ordained of God*; and to reſiſt them, will be to act in oppoſition to His eſtabliſhment, it will be nothing leſs than to *reſiſt the ordinance of God.*

FROM

* Pſalms xxxv. 10. lxxxii. 3.

From this view of the Apoſtle's argument it appears, it was altogether beſides his intention to ſtate and aſcertain what are the bounds and limits of civil authority on one hand, or of civil ſubjection on the other: we are to look for the juſt meaſure of both theſe duties where we did before; we are to go to the law of nature, and learn what are the ends and purpoſes to be ſerved by civil union, and from thence determine the different obligations of governors and governed. No doubt caſes may happen, in which the powers uſurped by the Magiſtrate may be ſo exorbitant, ſo contrary to the truſt repoſed in him by the People, and, if ſubmitted to, ſo ruinous to all their deareſt rights and privileges, that the bond of civil ſociety may by this means become not barely looſened, but diſſolved. Such a caſe, we all know, happened to ourſelves, now near a century ago; which occaſioned that memorable æra of our hiſtory, we call THE REVOLUTION. The avowed deſigns of the King were in direct contradiction to the eſtabliſhed laws, and abhorrent from the ſpirit and principles of our Conſtitution: The antiquated claim to a Diſpenſing Power, which had hung like the ruſty armour in ſome trophy'd hall, as an harmleſs enſign of former glory, was taken down and furbiſhed again for uſe; and that Prerogative, which ſome of his anceſtors had principally employed for an ornament of ſpeech, or as the decoration of an harangue, he was preparing to exert in ſober ſadneſs againſt his people: The yoke that was meant to be thrown upon our necks was Popery and Arbitrary Power: And by the ſignal goodneſs of Providence, a remedy

was at hand and within our reach, to which we could, and to which we did, with ſucceſs, thank God! apply, to remove the calamities which then oppreſſed us. When we labour again under the like malady, the like methods may again be lawfully uſed for our recovery; but it becomes us to be well aſſured the caſes are indeed the ſame, before we venture to apply the ſame ſevere regimen; with all the ſymptoms of health about us, we are not to fall ſick of fancy; or, when we feel ourſelves at eaſe and happy, be perſuaded we are undone.

But the deſtruction of free governments has not always ariſen from the unconſtitutional demands of the Prince; the ſame calamity hath been occaſioned, and not leſs frequently, by the illegal violencies of the Subject. The evils, which brought on the impious parricide of this day, are not *all*, ſurely, to be aſcribed to the imprudences of the Monarch; in theſe misfortunes the People had at leaſt their ſhare. If they owed it to their country to provide, that the authority of the Sovereign ſhould no longer be vague and undefined, but fixed within preciſe and legal bounds; no pretences to Patriotiſm could juſtify their ſo diminiſhing it of its ancient weight, as to deſtroy its force and moment in the balance of the Conſtitution. If, not content with reforming the State, they were carried by the eagerneſs of their zeal to correct abuſes in the Church; they can hardly be entitled to our praiſe, for including among theſe abuſes the exiſtence of that Order, which had always been eſteemed an eſſential

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part of the Engliſh Government, which was in fact coeval with the Monarchy, and which, in the opinion of the moſt ſober judges of Eccleſiaſtical Polity *, had *ſome* claim to be originally derived from Apoſtolical appointment. If they had reaſon on their ſide, when they complained of the intolerant maxims of the Court, and contended for that great prerogative of man, the right of worſhipping God according to conſcience; it was with no good grace that afterwards, the ſame principles were put in force, and with greater rigor, by themſelves, when they inhibited every mode of devotion, even in private, that was not conformable to their own Directory. The extravagancies of popular power appear in theory to be at leaſt as dangerous as thoſe of regal; and the conduct of the Demagogues of thoſe days confirms too plainly the juſtneſs of ſuch ſpeculations: Not ſatisfied with pruning away ſome of the more luxuriant and cumbrous branches of Prerogative, they undermined its root; till at laſt the venerable tree, after long reſiſting the mercileſs blows of its enemies, and ſtripped of all that comelineſs that had invited the kingdom to its ſhade, fell; and the Conſtitution was overwhelmed in its ruins.

But whether abuſes in free ſtates have ariſen from the encroachments of King or People, if the iſſue of political ſtruggles in endeavouring to correct them has been upon the whole productive of good, we have reaſon to be thankful for the advantages that have been procured from ſuch

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* Hooker. E. P. Book VII.

contentions. True: No thanks however to the principal actors in thoſe turbulent ſcenes, for the violations of law and juſtice by which theſe advantages were eventually obtained. We do not ſcruple to ſay, the adorable myſtery of our Redemption could not have been completed, had not Chriſt been offered on the croſs a Sacrifice for the ſins of the world: But no acknowledgments, I preſume, are therefore due to the faithleſs diſciple, by whom the Son of God was betrayed, and it would ſtill have been *good for that man, if he had not been born* *. The counſels of Infinite Wiſdom are not impeded or delayed by our wickedneſs. Under the direction and controul of Providence, the impious claims of a corrupted Church may be the cauſe of rejecting its uſurped ſupremacy, and of reſtoring truth and purity to Religion; arbitrary power may be made the corner-ſtone of civil liberty; and the jarring clamours of a miſguided populace concur, like diſcords in muſic, to the general harmony of Government. Though we abhor and execrate the Inſtruments by which theſe great and ſalutary purpoſes have been effected, we admire and adore the rectifying hand, that could divert them from their natural miſchiefs to become the authors of ſuch ſignal bleſſings: not unto them, but to an higher power we aſcribe it, that the ſtorms with which this nation was agitated, during the Great Rebellion, were at length allayed; that the fury of civil ſedition ſubſided, and, like the thunder, which it emulated in its deſtructive progreſs, that it was the means of purging the air of our conſtitution from the

* Matth. xxvi. 24.

the maglignant influences under which it laboured, and of rendering it purer and calmer than it was before.

FROM the ſober and diſpaſſionate review of the cauſes and conſequences, which preceded and followed the event of this day, may be derived abundant matter of ſalutary inſtruction, for the regulation both of our Civil and Religious Conduct.

AND the firſt leſſon, which the calamities of this period will do well to teach us, (and there are many, who have it *yet* to learn) will be the danger of refining too much, in endeavouring to attain an imaginary perfection in any human inſtitutions, whether of Government or Religion. Where did all the viſionary ſchemes of thoſe levellers end, who laboured with ſuch ſuſpicious diligence for an unbounded Liberty in the State, but in the erection of the moſt lawleſs Tyranny, that ever free people were oppreſſed with? In what again did the projects, equally illuſive, terminate, for effecting Purity in the Church, but in the abolition of our primitive Eccleſiaſtical Form, and ſetting up in its ſtead the wildeſt, the moſt intolerant, as well as intolerable, ſyſtem of ſpiritual domination, that ever deſecrated the religion of Chriſt? Nor let it be inſinuated, that theſe diſaſters happened, as has ſometimes been the caſe in other ſubverſions of authority, when the minds of men had been as it were fitted for civil or religious ſlavery, by being long hackneyed in the proſtitute arts of venality, or habituated to the

the inglorious ſhackles of ſuperſtition: For, as if it had been the purpoſe of Providence to inform us, to what fatal lengths it is poſſible for men to be tranſported, through an intemperate fondneſs even for the beſt things, (and a free Government and true Religion are ſurely among the beſt) the diſorders we are ſpeaking of were permitted to take place, when the ſpirit of Liberty was at its height, when the genius of the old Conſtitution, and the nature and extent of Goſpel-Freedom, began to be underſtood; when ſuch men as *Falkland* and *Hyde* were at the helm; and when Oppoſition to the meaſures of the Court was conducted by a conſtellation of the brighteſt geniuſes for Government, that ever illumined the Britiſh Hemiſphere. But what are the feeble aids, which prudence, and honour, and virtue, and piety, are able to afford, when traverſed in their generous deſigns by the rage of party, or the ſallies of fanaticiſm? When the freedom of ancient Rome had begun to decline, and was even nodding to its fall; the endeavours of its firmeſt and moſt diſintereſted friends ſerved to little elſe but to accelerate its ruin. Its doom was determined: And not all the gravity of the Senate, not all the eloquence of Cicero, nor all the virtue of Brutus, could ſave their devoted country from deſtruction.

Secondly, from the events which were immediately ſubſequent to the diſſolution of the Church and Monarchy, we may learn the neceſſity of an Eſtabliſhed Religion. Certain warm aſſertors of liberty, it is true, under a real or feigned appre-

apprehenſion of the miſchiefs occaſioned by Fanaticiſm, have indulged themſelves in talking and writing freely againſt Eſtabliſhments: But neither their names, nor their numbers, nor their arguments, are of weight to oppoſe to the general perſuaſion of the advantages of ſuch inſtitutions. It is ſeldom ſeen, that the members of a civil community agree in the ſame Creed: And where there is a diverſity of Sects, all at variance with one another, and none of them engaged in the ſervice of the State; it is obvious how much the public ſafety may be endangered, in critical conjunctures, by factious men, under pretence of aſſembling for the purpoſes of Religion. Nor is any expedient left to the Magiſtrate to prevent this inconvenience, and to break the influence which muſt always ſubſiſt between an independent Clergy and their reſpective congregations, and transfer that influence to himſelf, but that of taking *one* of theſe Sects under his own immediate care, and maintaining its Miniſters at the public charge, and of leaving the reſt under a full and free Toleration. As the only legitimate motive to ſuch an alliance is civil utility, or on account of the obvious advantages of Religion to the community; in forming his choice among the ſeveral religious ſocieties, the Magiſtrate will of courſe be directed to the *largeſt:* Becauſe the benefits ariſing from his protection will thus be extended to the greateſt number of citizens that is poſſible; and becauſe a greater number, having a greater intereſt at ſtake, will prove a more uſeful ally to him in carrying on the deſigns of Government, than a ſmaller number will or can. In the mean time, as was ſaid, to other Sects, whoſe

opinions are harmleſs or merely abſurd, he will indulge a Toleration: And to this he will be induced from reaſons both of juſtice and of prudence: Of *juſtice*, becauſe though Government has a right to confine its favours to that mode of worſhip which it moſt approves, it has no right to enforce the obſervance of it on thoſe, who in their conſciences believe conformity to it to be ſinful: And of *prudence*, becauſe Toleration naturally tends to relax the hatred of ſectaries to one another, to weaken the attachment to their own particular forms, and to allay, if not extinguiſh, religious heats and diſſenſions.

It is to be lamented here, that the divine doctrine of Toleration, which was indeed introduced, but with no good faith, by the laſt king of the Houſe of *Stuart*, was not completely ſecured by law till after the Revolution. But of the neceſſity of an Eſtabliſhment we need no better or ſtronger proof, than what ariſes from the very hiſtory we are conſidering. For when now the ſworn foes to what they called an Antichriſtian Epiſcopacy had ſo far ſucceeded in their views, as to have effected the overthrow of the ancient Eſtabliſhment; they ſoon found, that even their favourite ſcheme of a Commonwealth could not be ſupported without a Public Religion: And the miſerable ſhifts they were reduced to, in order to preſerve ſome ſhadow of conſiſtency in their conduct, are not unworthy the notice of ſagacious obſervers. For deeply rooted in their hatred to Epiſcopal Government, and now at laſt as deeply ſenſible of the want

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of an Eccleſiaſtical Adminiſtration of ſome kind or other, they were compelled, in the ridiculouſneſs of their diſtreſs, to erect Preſbytery, which next to Prelacy they held in the greateſt abhorrence, into the National Church.

Thirdly, after what has been ſaid of the Expediency of a Public Religion, accompanied with a Toleration, it will be no unſeaſonable digreſſion to advert to the reaſons, on which the Uſe and Equity of a Teſt Law, by way of ſecurity to the Church Eſtabliſhed, may conſiſtently be maintained. It is of the nature of Religious Sects, as ſuch, to conceive their own ſyſtem of Faith and Worſhip to be purer and to approach nearer the ſtandard of perfection than that of any other; for on no principle but this can they be ſuppoſed to have *ſeparated* from other religious ſocieties, whether national or tolerated. Under this perſuaſion they will always be trying (and the more ſincere they are in their perſuaſion, the more earneſtly they will be trying) to propagate their own opinions, and to advance their own models on the ruins of the reſt; and, as the ſureſt way of effecting this, to intereſt the State in their ſervice, by gaining a part of the Legiſlature to their ſide. In this purſuit, beſides the ſimple motive of truth, it may be preſumed, they will be not a little ſtimulated, from the view of thoſe temporal emoluments, which they ſee annexed to the Religion of the Magiſtrate, and from which they themſelves, unjuſtly, as they will think, are at preſent excluded. Nor is there any other way of preventing them from accompliſhing their deſigns, and erecting them-

themſelves into the National Church, than by keeping them out of the public adminiſtration, and taking care that offices of truſt and dignity, in the diſpoſal of Government, ſhall be conferred on ſuch perſons only, whoſe principles incline them to preſerve the Conſtitution *in all its parts*. Now this is the preciſe buſineſs of a TEST: Not as an artful mode of harraſſing our adverſaries, but as a prudential proviſion to ſecure ourſelves: Not as an engine of oppreſſion, to lay men under legal diſabilities, becauſe they profeſs not the true Faith; but as a weapon of defence, to guard us from the attacks of thoſe, who are prepared to catch at every opportunity to do us harm: Not as a *penal* Law, and by way of puniſhment for opinions; for with opinions, provided they be neither deſtructive of private virtue nor ſubverſive of civil authority, the Magiſtrate has no concern; but as a Law of *reſtraint*, by which the men, who hold opinions unfriendly to the Religion of the State, are with-held from ſituations, where they might poſſibly reduce thoſe opinions to practice: Not that the National Church may perſecute its opponents, but that it may not lie at the mercy of its enemies: Not that it may become a Tyrant, but that it may not become a Slave.

Fourthly, and to return. But the miſeries, which in the times of the Great Rebellion deſolated this unhappy nation, were not ſuffered by a merciful Providence to laſt long; and moſt unexpectedly, after all attempts for retrieving the honour of the Britiſh name had proved abortive, the Kingdom,

dom, as if ſickened on a ſudden with its follies, agreed as one man to recal the exiled Heir of the Monarchy, and to re-eſtabliſh their original Conſtitution in Church and State. But here again a lamentable inſtance preſented itſelf of that infirmity of our common nature, which Lord Bacon has admirably deſcribed, when he tells us, it *knows not how to keep a mean.* For ſo it was, that men, diſguſted at the abominable cant, which prevailed through the whole of the Uſurper's adminiſtration, ſoon ran into the oppoſite extreme of laughing at all Religion; and never thought they had ſufficiently provided againſt the returns of hypocriſy and diſſimulation, till they had turned the ſtream of faſhion into the oppoſite channel of open vice and impiety. Nor did the evil, though bad enough already, ſtop here: The Clergy were not uninfected with the general contagion. The ſhameful perverſion of the Scripture doctrine of *Salvation by Faith*, together with the contempt in which the *beggarly elements* of Law and Juſtice were held, by the ſeditious preachers under the Republic, induced the Divines after the Reſtoration, inſtead of ſoberly inſtructing their hearers to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by *adding to their Faith Virtue* *, to reſolve the whole of Revelation into a ſyſtem of Morality. The conſequences were ſuch as might be expected: The ſubſtantial truths of Chriſtianity were attenuated and ſubtilized into modes of ſpeech: The doctrines of Redemption and Atonement were affirmed to be nothing more than accommodations to Jewiſh prejudices: And at a time,

* 2 Pet. i. 5.

when we had juſt emerged from the ſink of Fanaticiſm, we were drawn by inſenſible degrees, and at length engulphed, in the giddy vortex of Socinianiſm.

The laſt leſſon which I ſhall mention, as ſuggeſted by the hiſtory of the day, will be to watch with a jealous eye the unruly workings of that Spirit, (improperly called the Spirit of Reformation) which, under the pretence of preventing or correcting abuſes in our Religious Polity, and never ſatisfied with things ſettled, would too probably, were the viſionary ſchemes propoſed attempted to be realized, be followed by the moſt ruinous effects: On the one hand, to be ſteady in aſſerting the inviolability of that Salutary Law, whoſe equity has been demonſtrated on the cleareſt principles of the law of Nature and Nations *; the abrogation of which would expoſe us to the incurſions of our moſt inveterate enemies; and to the want of which, in the times we have been deſcribing, the demolition of the National Religion is chiefly to be aſſigned †: And on the other hand, to guard our common

* See The *Alliance between Church and State.* Book III.

† It is true that, long before this period, there had been *Penal Laws* againſt Diſſenters in plenty; but it is as true that, through the lenity of Government, theſe had become utterly ineffectual; ſo that all employments of the State lay as open to them as to others. No ſooner therefore was the ancient Conſtitution reſtored, than, as the ſureſt method of preventing a return of paſt calamities, an Act was paſſed, by which Diſſenters were excluded from *Offices in Corporations*: And this Law was quickly followed by another, commonly called the *Teſt Act*, whoſe *immediate* purpoſe, as the Title ſets forth, was to prevent the dangers from *Popiſh Recuſants*; but whoſe *general* intent was to ſecure the National Church from Sectaries of *every* denomination, both *Popiſh* and *Proteſtant*.

mon Chriſtian Faith, of which the Church of England is at once the Depoſitary and the Bulwark, by *giving place by ſubjection, no not for an hour*, to thoſe, who, with the moſt plauſible appearances of reſpect for its Diſcipline, are known to have no juſt regard to ſome of its moſt eſſential Doctrines; and for the ſame reaſon too, which influenced the great Apoſtle to oppoſe the *falſe brethren* of his own times, *that the truth of the Goſpel may continue with us* *.

To end with the obſervation with which we begun: The Apoſtles of Chriſt thought the honour of their Religion was concerned, in requiring from their converts obedience to the Civil Magiſtrate, and that at a time, when the powers, to whom they were in ſubjection, were Idolaters, and the Chriſtians were accuſed of being enemies to the State, becauſe they declined to throw a grain of incenſe on the public altars. The ſame duty is with greater reaſon required from us, who live in a country where Chriſtianity is the Religion eſtabliſhed by law; where the Prince upon the throne is deſirous only of gaining the hearts, without encroaching on the rights, of his people; and where no ſubmiſſions are expected, that are inconſiſtent with ſuperior obligations. What the Goſpel thus enjoins, a regard to our own intereſts, rightly underſtood, powerfully recommends. Liberty itſelf cannot be ſupported without authority; nor can authority be maintained without ſubjection to law. *Every kingdom divided againſt itſelf is brought to deſolation* †: It is either overturned at once by

* Gal. ii. 4, 5. † Matth. xii. 25.

by the invaſion of a neighbouring power, ever on the watch to take advantage of its confuſions; or elſe, after long languiſhing under public want and private luxury, dies away, like rivers that are loſt in the ſands. The knowledge of ſuch events, held out to our contemplation in the faithful monuments of paſt ages, ſhould ſtimulate us, as we value the bleſſings of our free Conſtitution, to cultivate in ourſelves and others, that duty and affection to our Sovereign, that reverence and reſpect for Magiſtracy, that ſobriety of deportment, and above all that virtuous ſimplicity of manners, which diſtinguiſhed the manly character of our forefathers. And then the Civil and Religious diſtractions, which have formerly weakened us at home, and rendered us contemptible abroad, will return no more; and amity and concord being at length reſtored, and our angry paſſions ſubdued by the correcting influence of Religion, we may aſpire with well-grounded affiance to the continued protection of that Almighty Being, in whoſe hand all events, whether natural or civil, become proper inſtruments of reward or puniſhment to his rational ſubjects, who with one nod controuls and pacifies the tumults both of the phyſical and moral world, and *ſtilleth*, with equal eaſe, *the raging of the ſea and the madneſs of the people* *.

* Pſalm lxv. 7.

FINIS.